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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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FOR PARAGRAPHS UNDER THE WORD "ANS." THE EDITOR IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE.

October, 1893.

QUESTION CCLIX.

If H.P.B. was taught of Masters for years in Tibet as stated, previous to giving out Their teaching to the Western world in 1875, why was the doctrine of Reïncarnation disavowed by her in her early writings? The Masters could not have spoken then, any more than later, in an uncertain tone on this great tenet of Theosophy, which is so interwoven with all Their teaching as to be inseparable from it. Yet in "Isis Unveiled" it is emphatically stated that "Reïncarnation is the exception, not the rule, for the race at large."

W. Q. J.—First, there is no evidence published that "H.P.B. was taught of Masters for years in Tibet". I should like to know where such a fact is alleged by any competent witness. *Second*, the doctrine of reïncarnation was not disavowed in her early writings. *Third*, the quotation from *Isis* at the end of the question is incorrect. Reïncarnation is not denied; but *reïncarnation of the astral monad* is denied as the rule. The words omitted from the quotation are the hinge on which this question and reply must turn. Inquirers and members should be careful in making references, as well as in getting the real import of what is read.

Turn to *Theosophist* pp. 288-9 of August, 1882, and you will find the question answered and the remark in *Isis* explained. Turn to *Path*, vol. 1, p. 232, Nov., 1886, and you will find the article *Theories about Reïncarnation and Spirits* dealing with the same matter and by H.P.B. She wrote that article at my request because of a similar question arising from a like misunderstanding. Furthermore I assert as a witness that from 1875 to 1879 H.P.B. taught and explained Reïncarnation, and in my case in respect to a relative of mine who died during that period. But when *Isis* was written, the full scheme of man's real constitution had not yet been given out, though hinted at broadly. Attention was then paid to the Kardec school of Reincarnationists with the object of overthrowing their theory, and H. P. B. then, as later, denied *personal reïncarnation.* The reëmbodiment of the personal astral—called "astral monad" in *Isis*—never was taught and is not taught by the school from which the *Secret Doctrine* emanates. Hence her denial of it as the rule in 1877 still holds good and is reässerted in the articles I have pointed out. There is therefore no inconsistency, though it must be admitted that her English in 1877—by one who had never written for publication—was not as clear as these abstruse subjects demand. For this we must allow, and we ought not to hold all her words to the strict rule we follow in dealing with an English philosopher, but should construe all together.

Reïncarnation of the "astral monad"—that is, the personal being and the astral body—is *not* the rule but is the exception; but reïncarnation of the Individual or "spiritual monad" is the rule and the doctrine; and it is taught in *Isis*, to which readers are referred. Wherever H.P.B. seems to deny reïncarnation in *Isis*, she is referring to personal reïncarnation, using the word "man" or "person" in that sense. By consulting the various paragraphs it is seen that the doctrine of successive rebirths is taught plainly, and when she speaks of reïncarnation—a new word for her then—she refers to the idea of personal reïncarnation. Some of her paragraphs go with detail into the causes for rebirths, but then she is referring to the reincarnation of the "thread-soul", which is not the astral soul. It should also be remembered that terms have been better

defined and more often used since 1875 than they were then when all was new, even though such mediums as Cora Richmond had before that taught now and then reïncarnation as a law without defining it. It is of course to be regretted that Col. Olcott tries with labor to show H. P. B. ignorant of the law in 1875, but that only convicts him of not then knowing the doctrine himself and as not having referred to her full explanations of 1882 and 1886. It does not prove anything against her save bad English. Yet with all her unfamiliarity with our tongue, the very sentence around which these discussions arise —and the sole important sentence that can be found—contains in itself in the words "astral monad" the solution of the difficulty. She began by saying "reïncarnation of the individual", the words *personality* and *individuality* then and worse than now being doubtful and interchangeable, but immediately qualifies the description by adding "or rather of his astral monad". If she were to construct the sentence now, the same idea would be there, but expressed in words intelligible to Theosophical students. But even up to this day our words are inadequate, for the terms *personality* and *individuality*, *soul* and *spirit*, are causes of confusion to different minds.

QUESTION CCLX.

Is not the ultimate result of the teachings of most of the Churches pernicious in that they inculcate dependence upon the merits of some one other than oneself, thus destroying self-reliance; insist upon the total native depravity of mankind, thus destroying a belief in the possibility of human perfectability; and declare that to depend for ultimate redemption upon one's own strength, will, and effort is almost an unpardonable sin?

Ans.—In great measure this is true, though not quite the fact that total depravity is a universal Churchly doctrine. It belongs to the Presbyterians. Some teaching, that of the American Church, for instance, is only that man "is very far gone from original righteousness", which is obviously correct.

One must remember, too, that the conventional theology, unphilosophical and unsound as it is, does not have all the results which should logically follow it. This is because it is not always consistently held, because contrary ideas commingle with and check it, and because the heart unconsciously protests against and annuls a good deal of it. Moreover, though reliance upon the merits of another is indefensible as a proposition, that other is regarded as a perfect example of virtue and God-like character, so that some reflex action of the trust is very constantly exhibited; and, indeed, the teaching itself is that that other is not only to be depended upon but to be imitated. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His". So that it cannot be said that the reliance enjoined dispenses from the obligation to acquire personal holiness.

Another qualification is that very many texts in the recognized authority teach contrary to the Confessions. "Work out your own salvation" is a case in point. The whole of St. James's Epistle, as well as numerous passages in the other Epistles and the Gospels, are emphatic in urging that faith without works is dead. And as these are read in public much more than are the Confessions, they must have an effect, all the more so because preaching in these days has veered very decidedly from the doctrinal to the practical.

And then again, no system is to be judged alone by *a priori* considerations and without inspection of its actual outcome; and that outcome is in the case of those who sincerely hold to the system, not of those who are indifferent to or avowedly reject it. No doubt the irreligious condition of much of the so-called Christian world is an indirect consequence of faulty or incomplete teachings, though also a revolt against the inconsistencies of Christians themselves, yet it can hardly be said that real devotion to the Christian system necessarily produces thin or flabby or unmanly character. What about Arnold of Rugby, and F. W. Robertson, and Phillips Brooks? These men were certainly singular examples of intense ardor for the religious system they upheld; yet every one honors them as eminently masculine and saintly. One might expect from pernicious doctrines a pernicious fruit, but, in truth, every community holds

noble natures, fine and elevated and generous, who root their faith and their life in these. Some of the grandest philanthropic works have been by men who believed their own natures essentially evil, who relied for safety wholly upon another's merits, and who would have regarded self-redemption as madness.

All this has to be considered. Yet, having considered it, one can still hold that a system philosophically false cannot be as wholesome as a system philosophically true. If the best results are to accrue from teaching, the teaching should be sound and not defective. Hence a far-sighted Theosophist is quite right in throwing all his energy into the promulgation of the Wisdom-Religion, for that alone recognizes all the facts in human condition and furnishes the means to correct them. It is not necessary to undervalue Christianity or to consider it essentially an evil: one may admit all that can be said in its favor and refuse either injustice or partiality, while still insisting that dogmas which are irrational cannot be wholly salutary, and that nothing can permanently uplift humanity which denies the two most vital truths in humanity's workings — Karma and Reïncarnation. One would therefore be unwise in expending effort on an inferior system when the superior was at hand and in need of all support; so that the obvious duty of Theosophists is to give their whole assistance to Theosophy, promulgating it in every judicious way, substituting its rounded truth for the defective or erroneous teachings elsewhere given, and fully perceiving that at length that will establish itself which is consonant with fact, endowed with motive, and continuously remedial of the evils and sorrows now desolating humanity.

QUESTION CCLXI.

Was the "fall into generation" on the physical plane a normal feature of human evolution, as stated in some Theosophical books; or was it abnormal and not intended by nature, as said in other Theosophical books?

Ans —There is an old proverb about the "disagreement of doctors". It might seem to have even greater cogency when mere students disagree. Certainly the FORUM is not endowed with knowledge of the facts sufficient to warrant a judgment. Anybody, however, can present *a priori* considerations, and perhaps this is the only thing possible until we reach, long hence, that stage when vision into the Astral Light becomes possible.

One such consideration is that the universality of the present mode of propagation seems to imply its normality. If different methods obtained in different races or in opposite hemispheres, the conclusion might be otherwise; but as no other is known to history or travel, the existing one may very well claim to be not an accident or a lapse, but to have the same sanction from Nature as breathing or digestion, for both of which as ample organic and functional provision has been made.

Another such consideration is that the perpetuation of the human family has not been left to chance or choice, but has been ensured through an instinct which is the strongest of all and which is connected with the strongest of all pleasures. That it is liable to abuse, and often is abused, proves nothing. So is any function—eating, drinking, sleeping—to which satisfaction attaches. Now the dominance in the physiological system of the nerve structure related to paternity and maternity, coupled with the intense impulse to continue the race, looks as if Nature had given very special care to this department of vitality, and hence that her work is not "abnormal".

Still a third consideration is that the disposition to throw slurs on all which is not super-physical exhibits rather a one-sided or a Manichean frame of mind, than that broad and hearty appreciation of life in all its forms which is the true attitude of a reverent student of being. Matter is as truly a reality as spirit, and whether you look at it as brought into existence by a Great First Cause or as co-eternal with spirit,—much more so, indeed, in the latter case,—you cannot deny it its dignity and worth. A supercilious tone towards a large part of the universe is not philosophic. Nor does it seem to be so towards any function or process not absolutely bad in itself. The

very phrase "*fall* into generation" exhibits this tone, and rather implies that the Theosophic writers using it do not look with complacency on any part of the "physical plane". But if so, their judicial qualifications would appear doubtful to those who see in every leaf and pebble, much more in the delicate organism of the human body, proofs of the Infinite Wisdom which has constructed all planes of life, and of the Infinite Power in whose hands we may safely rest.

It is probable, too, that any feature in evolution not intended by nature, and hence abnormal, would have died out long ago. The things which become disconnected from the scheme, or which evolve irregularly from it, do not have the organic life essential to perpetuity. They are like what are called in law "monsters", and neither survive long time nor have posterity. The uninterrupted continuance of any feature in evolution, more especially if an integral and radical part of it, gives presumption to the belief that it was designed.

But as was said at the outset, these considerations are only *a priori*, and therefore are not final

QUESTION CCLXII

There seems to be a glaring inconsistency not only between the two answers to the question in FORUM LI *about unmerited suffering and its reward, but between what W. Q. J. says now and what he said when answering a question in relation to the unmerited Karma of some of the people who perished in the Johnstown flood. In his old answer he took for granted the existence of some unmerited suffering, but now he says there is no such thing.*

W. Q. J.—Quite possibly the reply made by me in FORUM LI may not agree with the Editor's, but that is only because my view and his are not the same, and in the T. S. each man is entitled to his own opinion. But I find no inconsistency between my answer and what I said respecting the Johnstown sufferers; however, as the question does not say where the Johnstown matter is printed, it may be left on one side.

I do not think any suffering or any enjoyment is unmerited. Whatever we have comes by law and justly. But as this is a world governed by cause and effect, the mental attitude of those who suffer or enjoy must be considered; it has its force and effect; it must be provided for. Men in their ignorance do not always see why they suffer, as no connection is visible between the punitive circumstances and the prior cause, which, indeed, had arisen in some long-gone life. Hence, while suffering, the person feels deeply that he does not merit it. This is what is meant by "unmerited suffering". In the mind is lodged the thought that pain has been suffered which was not merited. Devachan provides for this just as it provides for many another supposed ill or injustice. There the person—due to the thought I have spoken of—finds for himself the reward for "unmerited suffering". If he were fully enlightened, of course he would see that all that had happened was just, and no unmerited suffering would exist in that case.

Modern minds are always dwelling on objective modes of thought which constantly ignore the truth that the mind is the source alike of pain and pleasure, of punishment and reward. The Universe is a vast ideation alone, and everywhere we must remember that the mind rules. Until the mind is free, illusion exists on every plane. In Devachan and in Earth-life the illusions are equally great. Inasmuch as the mind is the ruler, the guide, and the standard, it must happen that we will often suppose we have been unjustly treated. Now the mere fact that we were not does not prevent the feeling of unmerited suffering unless the person is fully aware of the fact and accepts it. And as most of us are not fully enlightened, we are constantly subjected to what seems unjust. Criminals often think they have been victims of injustice. This must be taken into account in nature, for their minds and thoughts are as much a part of it as any other mind. Hence a large sum of suffering must exist that is classed as unmerited. This is provided for in Devachan. But in Earth-life exact objective as well as mental results follow. If this "unmerited suffering" is not to be so classed, we will have to find some other word. At present we would have to use a long sentence to express the

idea, thus: "In Devachan the person finds compensation for those sufferings which in earth-life were supposed by the sufferer to be unmerited, in consequence of prior causes not being known".

But most certainly every circumstance, all suffering, all pleasure, each reward and every punishment, are the due and exact result of causes set up by the person who is the experiencer. And the richness or the barrenness of Devachan itself is in each case also an exact result of causes set up in the preceeding Earth-life, which in turn are the outcome—due to evolved character—of all previous lives.

Ans.—In addition to the treatment of undeserved suffering in FORUMS XI and LI, there are important truths in the first answer to the Johnstown case, FORUM III. And observe this; we can see reason for Devachanic recompense for suffering really unmerited, but why should there be any for a person imagining it unmerited when it was not? If the pain was really due, the person ought to suffer; and his supposing it not due, and therefore having mental grief, does not constitute ground for renumeration. Ignorance and consequent mistake are not subjects for reward. And inasmuch as only the enlightened and dispassionate, who are few, perceive that sorrow was deserved and so submit, the enormous mass of human beings considering their sorrows unjust, it follows (on W.Q.J's theory) that the majority and the least worthy of the race have a Devachanic reward which the few and the best have not! In other words, a premium is put upon ignorance over knowledge, and upon delusion over truth! But what about justice then?

It is better to stick to H.P.B's teaching and the Master's as given in FORUM LI, especially because they use the word "undeserved" in its accustomed sense and present a doctrine which sustains itself under the test of analysis and reason.

QUESTION CCLXIII.

How is one to learn the nature of and how to practice the specific course of training, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, spoken of in the "Epitome of Theosophy"?

W. Q. J.—The specific course of training spoken of in the tract referred to in the question is found in many Hindu, European, and other writings. It was practised in part by the Christian mystics just as much as by others, but it is specially given and explained in Patanjali's *Yoga Philosophy*. If one follows all the directions of that book he will reach the highest result of spiritual cultivation, but the difficulty is that many Theosophists, after reading that book, attempt to practice portions of it without attending to the high moral precept therein, and naturally they create disturbance within themselves without any very beneficial result.

Ans.—The course referred to concerns those who have made some progress on the way and have mastered the elementary principles of truth and duty which must precede any advanced instruction. This is explicitly stated in the tract. We have repeatedly been told that the purpose of all genuine training on Theosophic lines is to reverse the present relations of the Lower and the Higher natures, releasing the Higher from its subjection to fleshly appetites and giving it its fitting supremacy over the animal within us. The perfected man is one who has brought his whole being into full harmony with Law and has symmetrically evolved in compliance with its provisions. This is, of course, a long and difficult process, extending through many incarnations, conducted upon the principles which experience has demonstrated, and fostered by help from Teachers familiar with the whole method through having undergone it. Naturally the process becomes more intricate as its earlier parts are mastered and self-knowledge with self-control is attained. But its inception is of a most simple and elementary nature. It does not concern itself with astral vision, or the eduction of latent faculties, or even the comprehension of recondite truths in Occultism, but with the commonest duties of daily life. If a man is lazy or quick-tempered or irritable or censorious or selfish or unjust, it is exactly in the correction of these evils that lie the first steps upon his path. The exaction before him is not vegetarianism or an effort to gain a Guru, but a persistent struggle to become industrious, self-controlled, sweet-tempered,

charitable, unselfish, and fair. Nothing beyond can be gained till these are, and nothing beyond need be yet much considered. But there is very ample field for all possible energy in the correction of those temperamental peculiarities which hinder him from always being at his best and which bring him into unhappy conflict with people around him. And so no man need expect, or even desire, to undertake the more advanced of Theosophic steps before he has adjusted his own nature and reduced his faults and follies below the level where they appreciably affect his walk and conversation. When he can honestly feel himself free from drawbacks which would imperil later progress, he is in position to consider the possibility of a higher stage. In the tract on *Spirituality* there are stated some exercises preparatory to this.

While in a general way it is doubtless a fact that men get what they strive for and only as they strive for it, there is perhaps a certain qualification in this matter of spiritual advance. As the Masters of Occultism are not openly known and are not as a rule accessible to aspirants, and as the fitness for advance consists in an interior state achieved by effort and not in an arbitrary pronouncement by any external authority, it would seem that the opportunity for a new step comes about coïncidently with the aptitude for it. In other words, the way ahead opens of itself when and because the man is qualified for it. The Law ensures the occasion when the aspirant has fulfilled its requisitions. Hence any strenuous effort to create it would be needless at the time and futile before the time. Chelaship is vouchsafed as soon as the student has the fitness for and consequently the right to it, and if he is still unaccepted it can only be because he is still unfit. There are very important truths upon this matter in the article "To Aspirants for Chelaship" in PATH of July, 1888.

It would appear, therefore, that knowledge of the specific course of advanced training referred to in the tract is not needed for most of us at our initial stage of the long journey, that we have present duties far more practical than any speculation upon a later era, that they will exhaust all strength as yet possessed, that only as they are fulfilled can any others beyond

them come into view, that the latter will surely appear when we are ready for them, and that the mystery in which future pursuits are now enveloped will be dispelled in due season though not before.

QUESTION CCLXIV.

In FORUM *No. 43, Question 216, the doctrine of the Antinomians is denounced. How are we to understand in "Tea Table" of "Path" for January, 1892, "For desire ceases to attract us when we no longer identify it with ourself."?*

W. Q. J.—I see no connection whatever between the doctrine of the Antinomians and the passage quoted from the *Path*. The Antinomians, doubtless arguing upon St. Paul's statement that certain persons become a law unto themselves, held that they were not subject to any law and could satisfy or work their desires in any direction. The statement in the "Tea Table" is intended to convey the idea that when we have gotten beyond desire it ceases to attract us, which is an entirely different matter from the Antinomian question. The Theosophic philosophy teaches that by overcoming desire, by ceasing to desire, by controlling the appetites, by turning away from the objects which attract the appetites, desire ceases to attract us, all of which seems to me to be almost the statement of a truism.

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